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TAGS: [KCRS](#) [EAID](#) [EFIN](#) [PREC](#)
SUBJECT: ITALY CONVENES G8 MEMBERS ON GAZA AID, PLEDGES \$1M

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Elizabeth Dibble
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On 9 January Italy convened a meeting of local G8 diplomatic representatives to discuss coordination of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Italy announced a pledge of approximately \$1m in emergency aid and asked others for a summary of their recent humanitarian activities. This meeting appears to be the first convened under the aegis of Italy's G8 Presidency. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Luigi Vignali, head of the Coordination Unit of the Italian MFA's Secretariat General, convened the first meeting under the new Italian Presidency in order to discuss coordination of aid to Gaza. The Italians gave only 24 hours notice to locally stationed G8 participants, so many were not prepared for an extensive exchange of information. Vignali said the purpose of the meeting was to 1) identify the most efficient channels for disbursing aid, 2) spotlight new humanitarian needs, 3) avoid duplication of effort, and 4) share information on best practices. Vignali added that developments on the ground were likely to warrant additional G8 meetings on the Palestinian aid issue during the Italian presidency.

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G8 Pledges for Gaza
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¶3. (C) Italy announced a pledge of approximately \$1m in emergency aid to Gaza in response to recent hostilities. Econoff and Poloff circulated a white paper detailing USG aid to Gaza. Some discussants noted contributions to the UN flash appeal for Gaza, announced 31 December, in addition to previously scheduled non-emergency Palestinian aid. Germany said it had provided 11 million euros for Gaza, of which 1 million euros were for the flash appeal and 2 million euros were pledged to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on 7 January. France stated that it had offered 3 million euros for Gaza, Canada said it had recently pledged 3.4m USD and Japan said its Gaza aid totaled \$10m, though it was unclear if these nations' funds had been given after the outbreak of recent hostilities. The United Kingdom pledged 6.8m pounds sterling (approximately \$10m USD), of which 4m pounds sterling were for the flash appeal. Russia did not commit to a figure, but offered to circulate a white paper at a later date. Sergey Patronov, the Russian representative, also said that Russia had successfully evacuated over 200 Russian, Canadian and third-country nationals from Gaza by

air. Anguel Beremliysky, the European Commission representative in Italy, said that of the 73m euros spent in 2008 by the EC for the Palestinians, approximately 40m euros were allocated for Gaza, and that 3m euros in emergency funds for Gaza had been pledged on 4 January.

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Italy's Aid Priorities during Its G8 Presidency
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¶4. (C) Italian G8 Sous Sherpa, Guido La Tella said that Italy would continue to use the G8 apparatus to respond to humanitarian crises as they arose, since the "biggest chunk" of international aid spending comes from G8 member states. La Tella said that ensuring food security and fighting malnutrition would be priorities over the coming year. He also identified water as an area of special import, saying that as a scarce resource it could be the source of conflict. Finally, La Tella advocated a "whole of country" approach to development, in which bi-lateral aid, private sector donations, multi-lateral aid and other sources of funding worked in concert to speed development.

¶5. (C) Comment: This meeting on Gaza aid may be part of an Italian effort to make up for cuts in its own humanitarian aid budget by "coordinating" the largesse of others. La Tella repeatedly advocated a "more structured" mechanism within the G8 context -- which he did not define -- for coordinating aid. Several of the participants politely questioned the reasoning for Italy's attempt to coordinate humanitarian aid to Gaza in Rome with the G8 countries' diplomats and not through other, well established forums such as the UN and EU. The Italians stated that they did not want to duplicate work being done elsewhere and noted that this forum was just an "introductory" meeting and that the overall purpose of the group's future meetings may be further refined. This left the group with more questions than answers about the role Italy seems to want to play. We will want to steer GOI thinking early on, as the Italians are already showing a penchant for using their G8 presidency to take on work that is more effectively done by others. End Comment.
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